Black and White Photography Techniques

Taking photos with the intention of turning them monochrome or black and white after the fact is a tricky thing to learn. Over the years, the more photos you take though, the more you will notice what makes a great monochrome photos. Starting off though, while editing photos maybe the colors just aren't working or the highlights and shadows are too extreme to look how you'd like them to. If you ever find yourself in this position, try pulling that saturation all the way down. It's amazing what you start to notice without the distraction of all of those colors.

For the most part, when you begin thinking about taking black and white photos, things are very similar to when taking color photos. You want to have good composition and lighting but you no longer need to be thinking about framing out that annoying orange sign in the background. Instead, you need to think about how the lighting is falling on everything inside your frame, what are going to be your highlights and what are your shadows. What is the contrast throughout the image going to look like without all these colors. Remember that darker colors will become your blacks and lighter colors will be your highlights.

This is where black and white photography really shines and is great for photographers to learn with. You begin focusing on the lighting of everything in your frame. You pay attention to how it falls on your subjects face and the scenery around them. You also begin focusing on textures and the lines throughout the frame. Really, it's all about contrast when shooting in monochrome.

Another thing to remember is that when editing in monochrome, its not just about bringing down the saturation. You still need to adjust your highlights and shadows, white point and black point. Even adjusting the white balance and color saturations will still affect your image and can really help you create better contrast throughout your image.

Personally, my favorite aspect of black and white photography is that I find myself really looking at the smaller details of an image. What can look like a more basic photo of someone sitting in a park, suddenly has a sense of nostalgia to it, a new feeling that when color simply isn't there. Starting off though, I recommend just copying some of your images, editing one in color and then the other in black and white. Notice how you approach both, what changes in your edits and ultimately how different the two photos feel.